

PRACTICE

EDIT 12 OCTOBER 2022
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SECRETARIAT, AEIDL &
EUTROPIAN

Participative approach

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Starting from outlining what concepts such as “co-creation” and “quadruple helix” signal for policy makers and practitioners, the chapter then examines evidence from relevant UIA projects among the twelve case studies.

Summary

Innovative urban projects aim to improve the design and delivery of thematic aspects of sustainable urban development in cities.. To do this, cities are exploring new forms of participation, which assign new powers to non-public actors and incentivise citizens to get involved. This chapter explores a selection of practices from UIA projects that showcase a variety of participative approaches. Starting from outlining what concepts such as “co-creation” and “quadruple helix” signal for policy makers and practitioners, the chapter then examines evidence from relevant UIA projects among the twelve case studies. Several good practices are highlighted and a series of key takeaways from the selected UIA projects are identified to guide a stronger participative approach for future integrated territorial development projects.



Future scenarios workshop with local residents from Pata Rât area in the framework of Cluj Future of Work project.

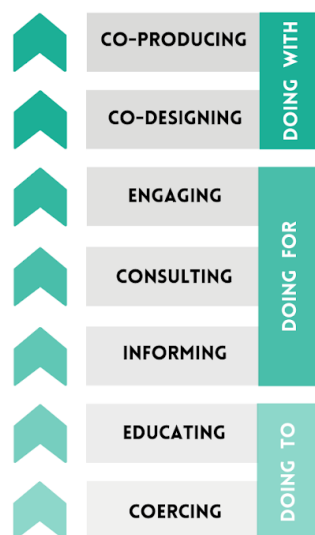
Definition and interpretations

Participation is a core principle that has informed European urban policy. In the New Leipzig Charter participation is seen as a crucial element of the integrated approach:

The integrated approach requires the involvement of the general public as well as social, economic and other stakeholders in order to consider their concerns and knowledge. Public participation in urban development processes should engage all urban actors, which also strengthens local democracy. Wherever possible, citizens should have a say in processes that impact their daily lives. New forms of participation should be encouraged and improved, including co-creation and co-design in cooperation with inhabitants, civil society networks, community organisations and private enterprises. Experimenting with new forms of participation can help cities manage conflicting interests, share responsibilities and find innovative solutions while also reshaping and maintaining urban spaces and forming new alliances to create integrated city spaces. ([The New Leipzig Charter](#), 2020, p.6)

In describing participative approaches, both development practitioners and policy makers use the terms “co-production” and “quadruple helix”.

Co-production. Involving users at different stages of a decision-making process has sometimes been termed, as “co-everything”, ranging from co-creation, co-design, co-implementation, co-production and co-management. Co production implies that “citizen participation or engagement should go beyond ‘ad hoc involvement’ such as public hearings or public comment periods, and should be a dynamic process with end users – citizens– centre stage ([JRC Handbook](#), 2020 p 121). Since the work of [Sherry Arnstein](#) writing about the USA’s Model Cities programme in 1969, the idea of a “ladder of participation” has gained traction. In this version (see figure 4.1) co-production is shown as the highest form of participation replacing citizen control in Arnstein’s original formulation.



Co-production as the highest degree of participation

Quadruple Helix. The quadruple helix built on the idea of the triple helix in which cities or regions worked with the private sector and research organisations to promote innovation. Adding civil society organisations to the mix made for a quadruple helix. Such diverse partnerships are very much in line with Article 8 of the Common Provision Regulation (CPR) for Cohesion Policy that describes that “a Partnership shall include at least the following partners: (a) regional, local, urban and other public authorities; (b) economic and social partners; (c) relevant bodies representing civil society, (d) research organisations and universities, where appropriate, such as environmental partners, NGOs, bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination” ([DG Regio](#), 2021, p 39). Mirroring this, the Urban Innovative Actions programme has encouraged the formation of diverse partnerships and, attribute a significant importance in the appraisal of project proposals to this aspect

This section aims to address the following research questions:

- How did projects identify the most relevant local actors to include in their partnership, and were the power relations between the stakeholders balanced?
- Were citizens and/or users involved in a meaningful way in the design of the project?
- Did some specific stakeholders, especially NGOs/citizens but also the private sector, have difficulties in being represented and heard? If so, how was this addressed?
- How was the project adjusted during implementation based on feedback by stakeholders? What tools or methods were used to involve citizens during implementation?

Analysis of the case studies and key takeaways

Experimenting with new forms of participation that can address complex urban challenges seems to be the area where most of the reviewed UIA cities chose to focus on. Rather than involving end-users in a highly participatory way, most UIA projects actually chose to delegate new powers to non-public actors such as NGOs or private companies and co-design and co-produce together with them. The choice is not surprising given the fact that a bottom-up approach requires long periods of time to be implemented that stretch much more than the three-year window of implementation given to UIA cities, as well as a mediator or convener that is traditionally a non-public actor. Thus, it is noteworthy to observe that when presented with the opportunity, most UIA cities chose to innovate at a mezzo level, between a bottom-up and a top-down approach. As a result, new governance mechanisms emerged that were explored in more detail in the previous chapter, but also stronger cross-sectoral integration.

#1 New forms of participation

A strong and balanced partnership was one of the requirements and assessment criteria for urban areas presenting a UIA bid. Several UIA projects admitted that this prerequisite was fundamental for a non-public actor to take initiative in approaching the municipality for co-designing an innovative solution. This was possible, especially in contexts where former metropolitan or city-wide alliances already existed or where local stakeholders had previously met and cooperated. Interestingly, in both **Košice 2.0 in Košice** and **Cluj Future of Work in Cluj-Napoca** it appears that such a context was their experience in running for the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) title. While Košice successfully won the ECoC title for 2013, Cluj-Napoca's proposal was rejected. However, regardless of the success of previous endeavours for a partnership between various local stakeholders, the opportunity to build on past experiences and in some cases on trust-worthy relationships enabled some transformative new forms of participation. For example, both Košice 2.0 and Cluj Future of Work feature innovative co-management practices, where power relations are more equally shared between a public and non-public body.

Moreover, balancing the power relations between stakeholders, also significantly influenced the project design. This is how **Košice 2.0** came to include activities related to increasing the capacity of the municipality for innovation and use of innovation methodologies such as design thinking and open data repositories. While the project looked at how to link citizen wellbeing with contemporary cultural heritage, it did so by enhancing existing physical assets (Bravo Hub) to be employed by culture and creative industries for new uses developed under the Citizen Experience and Wellbeing Institute managed by the former ECoC leading organisation- the Creative Industry Košice (CIKE).

Similarly, **Cluj Future of Work** came to be organised as a three-year fast prototyping process, building upon the innovation methodology advanced by Cluj Cultural Centre, the umbrella organisation representing 100 local actors and a spin-off of the alliance built for the European Capital of Culture. This meant that both Cluj-Napoca Municipality and the other consortium members engaged in a novel way of working, one based on iterations and learning from experimental actions. Moreover, it was also the first time for Cluj-Napoca Municipality to implement a co-management practice. In addition, the diverse structure of the partnership, where IT and cultural clusters worked alongside university and social and cultural NGOs determined the cross-sectoral integration of the Cluj Future of Work interventions. Poverty reduction actions were combined with measures for supporting entrepreneurship and creativity to bridge the gap between jobs and skills.

Key takeaway 1

Giving new power roles to non-public actors leads to innovative new forms of participation. It is important, when building a project's partnership, to look beyond the usual suspects traditionally involved in a particular thematic area. Assigning new power roles to non-public project partners and allowing the public actor to play an integral part can lead to new forms of participation. Moreover, this can contribute to highly innovative governance mechanisms and results that can inform local and regional public policies.

#2 Give citizens an active role

Engaging citizens in a meaningful way from the co-design phase or in the implementation period still constitutes a

strong paradigm shift to how most public organisations work. Thus, it is not surprising that some of the most innovative elements of UIA projects stem from this bottom-up approach. For example, **Air Heritage in Portici** chose to involve citizens in data gathering, monitoring and pilot actions for reducing air pollution and reaching a policy target that would have otherwise been unrealistic (see Box below). **APPLAUSE in Ljubljana** centred its entire approach of tackling the urban environmental hazards of the invasive alien plant species (IAPS) with the support of citizens. As such, Ljubljana residents contributed to identifying IAPS using a mix of technologies which included an online geo-localisation database and an artificial intelligence inspired dataset. Moreover, they were involved in a variety of open innovation workshops for experimenting with new use cases and business models based on the recycling of the IAPS. With over 2,700 participants taking part in biomass processing workshops, APPLAUSE managed to successfully upcycle IAPS. This result would have been unlikely in a relatively short time if a traditional top-down approach would have been used. In addition, as environmental challenges are generally related to shared public goods (air, public urban spaces, water etc.), unless there is a mutual awareness of everyone's role in tackling the issue, interventions fail. Thus, giving citizens an active, meaningful role builds an understanding of this collaboration prerogative.

Some UIA projects also recognized that a true citizen-led approach is risk-taking, especially because of the considerable amount of time it requires. This is why several UIA projects opted for a citizen-focused approach, where the needs and aspirations of the end user shaped the project interventions, but were not led by end users. For example, **Plan Einstein in Utrecht** based its innovative interventions in rethinking refugee centres on the user experience of being active from the first day they arrive. The project also recognized that the refugees are not there by choice, some not envisioning the Netherlands as their final destination. Hence, the project successfully tested whether changing the integration service offered, such as offering English courses instead of the previously mandatory Dutch classes, can in fact build skills better suited for the needs of refugees. While in the case of **USE-IT in Birmingham**, the project focused on building the skills for being able to better assess and work with end users, by creating two training programmes for Community Researchers. One programme was accredited by Birmingham University and another was developed as regular training by the Birmingham Voluntary Service Council. The first Community Researchers were the ones that conducted the field work which was the cornerstone for implementing the project's innovative approach: to map the "micro" skills of overseas migrants residing in the neighbourhood targeted by the project and match them with the needs of the "macro" public institutions serving the entire region. Under this scheme, over 250 overseas migrants with medical or health education skills from the neighbourhoods of Greater Icknield were connected with job opportunities in the regional hospital. Currently, replication of this approach is considered at national level.

Citizens in a central role to tackle air pollution

[Air Heritage](#) in Portici demonstrates the potential of active citizen participation through citizen science in tackling the challenge of reducing air pollution. Citizens are part of the whole process, from data collection to policy review. Finally, the use of an integrated approach brings innovation at a social, behavioural, political and technical level to bridge the gap among regulators and citizens.

“The first step toward structuring the project was to make use of what the territory had to offer in terms of science, participation, and the use of government to solve the problem” stated the Air Heritage, ENEA representative.

Portici is a densely populated suburban city where air pollution is largely due to urban mobility. Although the city has made some efforts to monitor air quality, demonstrating local pollution problems, no solution was considered due to a lack of awareness among citizens. Things started to change when the European Commission launched infringement procedures against Italy for violating air quality standards.

The project took a threefold approach: (i) expanding air pollution data at a small-scale level in the city and over different time periods; (ii) developing a decision support tool for the local authority; (iii) disseminating information to the local communities to encourage families to participate in project activities.

Quadruple helix stakeholders were involved in the co-design process from the outset of the project. Fixed air monitoring stations were complemented by monitoring systems operated by citizens, using portable devices and moss placement on citizen's balconies across the city. CSOs and local environmental NGOs played a pivotal role in citizens' engagement. This data was then made available through an open access platform. Collaboration with schools deployed a zero-emission mode of transport, a 'pedibus', to foster the change in existing patterns of mobility.

Partnership between the different services and institutions and continuous active participation and communication with citizens was key to the success of such a project. Soft solutions emerged from younger generations as drivers for change in existing mobility patterns and fostering behavioural change, calling for multi-disciplinary technological development and expertise from different scientific domains. The combination of bottom-up and cross-sectoral dimensions was clearly a success factor. Citizen science can also help to alleviate administrative tasks for city staff and generate a large amount of data to develop customised solutions and policies.

Key takeaway 2

Considering a citizen-focused approach from the initial stage of the project can be the basis for the innovative solution offered. The overarching expected impact of integrated territorial development and innovative urban projects is to serve citizens as end-users by making urban areas places of opportunity, equity and prosperity. These transformations require active collaborations of the quadruple helix stakeholders throughout the process. Putting citizens at the centre of the project incites behavioural change and interest in city governance, and enables authorities to better align services and urban policies to citizens' needs and aspirations.

#3 Clear partnership roles and decision-making structures

UIA projects partnerships revealed not only new power structures between public and non-public actors, but also new roles that were taken by stakeholders. While a public-private partnership is a formula oftentimes promoted, in practice, the local experience has shown it is difficult to form a partnership at an “ideation” or “exploration”

phase. If the logic of client and supplier is kept, or the procedure of a public tender, there is actually little room for co-creation and sharing of innovation resources. This was the case for both **CitiCap in Lahti** and **Vilawatt in Viladecans**, two UIA projects which extensively used innovations coming from the private sector to give them new uses in a public sector logic. For example, CitiCap tested behavioural changes towards sustainable mobility options, especially by piloting a personal carbon trading (PCT) pilot scheme app and a bicycle highway based on co-designed and technology-driven elements. The co-design phase of the project enabled experimentation with new representation roles of stakeholders that helped the city manage conflicting interests on how public and private actors can collaborate on technology use cases that imply several patents and intellectual property elements. Involving the Finnish mobility data company MOPRIM as a project partner, rather than as a supplier, allowed the public and the non-public actors to work on ideation and innovation together. The same approach of giving both private actors, but also citizens roles of co-designers of solutions has been used extensively by **APPLAUSE in Ljubljana** (see box below).

Moreover, in the implementation phase, in order to sustain the good functioning of the partnership, most UIA projects acknowledged the importance of dedicating sufficient resources and staff for this. Some UIA projects used innovative elements to deliver this, as is the case of Home Silk Road in Lyon Metropole, which employed the Société par Actions Simplifiée instrument, a formal way of legalising a multi-stakeholder partnership in order to make procurement and joint implementation easier.

Co-Designing Circular Economy Business Models

[APPLAUSE](#) in Ljubljana brings together quadruple-helix stakeholders in treating the invasive alien plant species (IAPS). Shifting from a linear to a circular economy model, the project tests environmentally, socially and economically sustainable business models and fosters co-design with citizens.

The project is integrated into the broader policy context of the city and builds on the tradition and partnerships developed through the European Green Capital (2016), Ljubljana's Zero Waste Strategy and other campaigns to eliminate IAPS, representing a holistic approach to the issue. There are about 150 alien plant species in the city's surroundings. Ljubljana shows that harmful plants that are considered waste can actually be transformed into a useful resource that creates economic value and promotes social economy and inclusion.

To promote sustainability from the outset, citizens took an active role in identifying IAPS using artificial intelligence feeding into the online geo-localisation database developed within the project, harvesting and processing through co-creation open design workshops for new IAPS products and business models. APPLAUSE mobilised 400 volunteers who, together with the municipal water and waste management public company and a private forestry company, produced 11 tonnes of herbaceous and 60 m3 of wood biomass in 23 harvesting campaigns. More than 2,700 participants took part in biomass processing workshops.

By co-production with different stakeholders, the final products were attractive and promoted the intrinsic values of APPLAUSE in terms of circularity, environmental awareness and responsible consumption. Green technologies and bio-based devices used for IAPS processing led to patents that improved business modelling. APPLAUSE shows that innovative technical solutions combined with citizen engagement are key to lasting change and drive social transformation.

“Building a partnership was a step-by-step process. In addition to active roles for citizens, we mapped roles, responsibilities and partners needed from the whole value chain. Some had completely different perspectives so it was important to have a discussion of how to tackle this issue in the beginning of the project.” APPLAUSE, Project coordinator

Key takeaway 3

Establishing clear partnership roles and investing in decision-making structures significantly improves the representation and commitment of non-public stakeholders in a UIA partnership. The diversity of a partnership often acts as a proxy for the extent to which a project can sustain an innovative solution. However, managing different competencies and organisational cultures, especially when there are no prior partnership experiences, can prove extremely taxing for the coordination team. This team needs to be adequately resourced and needs, tight coordination by the Lead Partner and clear roles for each partner as well as good communication and decision-making mechanisms.

#4 Plans evolve

Several UIA projects managed to successfully integrate the feedback of stakeholders during the project implementation, consequently achieving significantly better results. In order to do so, the projects embedded in their activities mechanisms for incorporating such changes. For example, **OASIS in Paris** used a combination of European peer-to-peer learning exchange and the Steering Committee as a decision-making body to make a noteworthy change in the projects' sectoral focus. **Cluj Future of Work in Cluj-Napoca** adopted a participatory budgeting mechanism as a way to allow the end users, the citizens of the Pata Rât community, to decide what actions should be implemented, which in hindsight proved to salvage the planned actions from becoming obsolete with the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

Thus, in the beginning, OASIS had a strong environmental sectoral focus, looking at how schoolyards could be collectively redesigned to act as neighbourhood facilities for climate change. This changed, as a result of a study trip proposed by one of the project partners to Antwerp in Belgium. The focus of the study trip where most of the project partners participated was to observe the design of schoolyards and the relationship between design and children's wellbeing. After the visit, by involving the project partners in the constant refinement of activities during the project steering committees, it became possible to co-decide that the educational focus was an untapped area of high impact that the project generated. The exchange and subsequent reflections were the catalysts to consider a change of plans. In this case, the new angle of children's wellbeing could be added to the already planned interventions of co-designing with children the selected Paris climate change-friendly schoolyards.

Comparable sectoral changes took place in the case of Cluj Future of Work, where initial planned actions meant the implementation of five pilot projects selected by the local community after an exercise inspired by the participatory budgeting methodology. The pilot projects had to respond to the challenge of informal work, or undocumented work practices and its effects for the impoverished community. As the participatory budgeting exercise was under implementation on the ground, the COVID-19 pandemic started. Thus, ideas that the vulnerable population and community facilitators had been discussing became obsolete, both because some became unrealistic for implementation, but also because the community made it clear their needs had changed. As a result, after several consultations and feedback loops, new measures that would allow the local community to keep their formal jobs or look for legal employment were identified and implemented. These included access to new sanitary units, wifi and public transportation access.

Key takeaway 4

Adjusting your project during implementation based on stakeholders' feedback can contribute to achieving greater impact. The reality of an innovative and integrated project entails that new information will surface during the implementation. Fostering both a management culture that allows constant feedback, but also developing mechanisms in which project stakeholders can actively participate in making adjustments to the original implementation plan can lead to greater impact and better use of the collective knowledge that is being generated.

#5 Foster behavioural change

Considerable attention has been given to exploring new tools and methods for citizen engagement in UIA projects. Such practices mirror the general impetus for innovation of all projects, but also speak about something more fundamental: in order to capture citizen's attention, more consideration has to be given to creating incentives that match the user's motivation. As such, the virtual currency created within **Vilawatt in Viladecans** enabled residents to get more value for their "virtual" money. By using the alternative currency, users would get discounts and offers for local services, resulting in a better economic choice. In addition, there was the transparency incentive that the currency, only accepted at the local level, was in fact sustaining local entrepreneurs and the local economy. Another noteworthy use of technology for citizen engagement is within **CitiCap in Lahti**. The projects needed citizens to voluntarily opt for using the CitiCap APP that would track the personal carbon footprint of users. And even though the use of the APP came with symbolic rewards such as free movie tickets or swimming pool passes, it was actually the intrinsic motivation of Lahti residents having an open attitude towards technology and a deep commitment to sustainability goals that mostly explained the large number of uses during the pilot period of the APP.

Moreover, when the COVID-19 pandemic context allowed, a combination of in-person and online citizen engagement tools were employed, adapting highly interactive methodologies such as hackathons, design thinking and prototyping (see the case of **Prato Urban Jungle** in Box below). In some instances, such as the case of **DARE in Ravenna**, the project organised its entire communication as a way to enable more citizen

engagement. Thus, the DARE Redazione was an online spin-off from a traditional newspaper newsroom, calling for online facilitators to join the conversation and project activities.

Combining citizen engagement and innovation tools into the Prato JUNGLATHONS

Junglathons were a very important part of [Prato Urban Jungle](#), PUJ. These Junglathons were three days of intensive co-design with stakeholders, citizens, residents and creatives. Through an innovative approach applied to a design thinking process, project partners involved the citizens of the Soccorso (St. Giusto) and Macrolotto zero neighbourhoods, through anthropological walks and discussions as a preparatory phase to the co-creation workshops. The aim of the Junglathon was that the ideas that emerged would be taken into consideration in the completion phase of the PUJ interventions. The Junglathon has seen intergenerational and heterogenic participation, where young students, the elderly and designers confronted each other. At the end of three participatory days, four of the project concepts from among several conceived during the workshops were presented with respect to the two areas of St. Giusto and Macrolotto zero.

Interestingly, the event also revealed that the primary necessity of the social housing setting in St. Giusto was the renovation of the units, heating system and better insulation instead of greening the area. While in Macrolotto zero, a neighbourhood with the highest concentration of Chinese community in Europe, there has been an almost complete lack of local community participation, as the market project did not involve any specific function addressing the needs and interests of the Chinese community. Thinking on how to involve marginalised groups has been evolving since then.

“The involvement in the project of innovative start-ups and companies, like greenApes and Treedom, but also engage citizens in gamification and co-creation activities, as well as in the governance of green initiatives was successful” said the Prato Urban Jungle municipality representative.

In this regard, through the engagement of innovative start-ups such as Treedom and greenApes, and the creation of new digital platforms, such as Prato Forest City (PFC) and the inclusion of the City of Prato in the greenApes app, citizens were able to directly present an urban forestry initiative and to promote virtuous behaviours. Local NGO Legambiente provided urban walks, seminars, talks, courses and toolkits all focusing on the importance of trees and biodiversity. Importantly, the main action of Legambiente took place in schools. All these digital activities and tools had as their goal to empower citizens to act for their own well-being and form a new responsible and sustainable generation of citizens.

Key takeaway 3.5

Employing behavioural-change tools and methods led to successful citizen engagement practices. Exploring the motivations of why end users would like to be involved or how to support their medium-term involvement requires a different set of tools. The use of diverse incentives, ranging from rewards such as movie vouchers or a gamified experience in an APP to community-building and peer recognition through outdoor events and workshops have all proved successful during project implementation. Also, a dedicated dialogue partner, either community organisers or facilitators, has a strong positive impact on the long-term quality of the citizen engagement process.

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